

**Testimony of IdeaTek in Support of HB 2618
Senate Utilities Committee – March 11, 2020**

IdeaTek Telcom has been headquartered in Buhler, Kansas for nearly 15 years. We are a competitive service provider of broadband and voice services that does not receive funding from the Kansas Universal Service Fund. We have used nearly all private investment to build over 2,400 miles of fiber optic infrastructure all over our great state. We've connected rural homes, farms, schools, cell towers, and other service providers to long term sustainable internet in areas other providers would dare not go, and we are focused now more than ever on the deployment of fiber optic broadband solutions for the underserved in Kansas. We believe we are experts in the field of closing the digital divide in broadband in our state.

IdeaTek supports the efforts of all companies working to deploy sustainable broadband to underserved residents, students, and businesses across Kansas. Many rural Kansans have been left behind in the digital divide and are unable to live in the modern world. This bill is another good step towards addressing and increasing Kansas' position in broadband availability.

Creating a grant program, which is competitively available to all broadband operators on an equal playing field and potentially to be matched with funding proposed in HB 2588 and SB 375 (FORWARD), is an effective way to increase broadband deployment. The funding proposed is short of what providers need, but it's a positive step that benefits underserved Kansas residents.

Recommendations

There are two changes, for the committee's consideration, we believe would improve the bill:

1: The Office of Broadband Deployment should receive authority and direction from the Legislature to advance concepts in the Broadband Task Force Final Report, such as drafting a broadband goal, addressing right-of-way access and other issues.

2: There is no current qualification criteria or definition of "Broadband". Qualifying areas should be defined as those unserved or underserved areas identified using the Kansas Connected Nation Map, and the federal standard and the newly adopted speed standard of the Kansas Broadband Deployment Taskforce of 25 Mbps download / 3 Mbps upload.

We commend the Committee for addressing this critical issue for Kansas. We support HB 2618 and encourage your support with the above changes.

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